

# Applying for Financial Assistance

for

## Land Stewardship & Conservation

**CRP**

Conservation Reserve Program

**WRP**

Wetland Reserve Program

**CSP**

Conservation Security Program

**EQIP**

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

**GRP**

Grassland Reserve Program

**WHIP**

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

**CREP**

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

**AMA**

Agricultural Management Assistance Program

This booklet is for you if you need technical and financial assistance to:

- Improve the condition of your soil
- Reduce nutrient & pesticide runoff
- Develop habitat for declining species
- Maintain land in grass cover
- Improve your irrigation water use
- Build outdoor classrooms
- Use manure from your operation as a resource, not a waste
- Plant trees for conservation, or
- Improve the condition of your pastures

## Overview

The term “federal farm bill programs” means a wide range of programs that offer both technical and financial assistance to land managers who wish to protect or enhance the natural resources on their private lands. Through their actions, benefits to the soil, air, water, plants and animals, and the rest of us are achieved.

Federal farm bill programs of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the USDA Farm Service Agency include:

AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance Program

CRP – Conservation Reserve Program

CREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

CSP – Conservation Security Program

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program

GRP – Grassland Reserve Program

WHIP – Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

WRP – Wetland Reserve Program

Application to federal farm bill programs for conservation work is open to persons, entities, and organizations regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. However, some programs are limited by rule to specific applicant types (such as agricultural producers) and to specific types of land (such as private land).

You are encouraged to complete this workbook to 1) focus your goals and objectives, 2) work with your local USDA Service Center staff to develop a conservation plan to meet your goals and objectives, and 3) determine whether there are conservation programs available to financially assist you in carrying out your plan.

Each section of the workbook stands alone, but should be used together to help you understand federal farm bill programs and their application processes. These sections do not necessarily have to be followed in order, as each applicant’s situation is different.

The entire process from program application to contract involves additional steps that this workbook does not cover. After an application is accepted as complete, it must be evaluated, or ranked, using pre-set program criteria. These criteria differ by program and are available on the agency programs website ([www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs)).

An estimate of the federal funding of the proposed conservation practices must be made. Applications are selected for funding based on their evaluation rank. The number of applications funded is based on the annual allocation of program dollars. Contracts are developed and must be signed, prior to any practices being implemented.

This workbook basically helps you get started. Once your application is received and entered into our system, NRCS and FSA will work step by step with you to assist you through the application process.

Acronyms used in this guide:

**AMA** – Agricultural Management Assistance Program

**CRP** – Conservation Reserve Program

**CREP** – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

**CSP** – Conservation Security Program

**EQIP** – Environmental Quality Incentives Program

**FSA** – Farm Service Agency, an agency of the USDA

**GRP** – Grassland Reserve Program

**NRCS** – Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the USDA

**USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

**WHIP** – Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

**WRP** – Wetland Reserve Program

Definitions used in this guide:

**Entity** – any partnership, joint venture, corporation (limited liability or other), estate, trust, non-profit association or group, or unit of state or local government that controls land for which conservation program assistance is being requested.

**Conservation practice** – any one of the over 160 different treatments, measures, or systems identified in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (available at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/efotg](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/efotg)) that address soil, water, air, plant or animal resource concerns. Each conservation practice has an approved standard that includes a definition, purpose, condition where the practice applies, criteria for implementation, and other considerations for adoption, operation, and maintenance.

## Section I: Ensure you are eligible

If you do decide to apply for financial assistance, before your application will be considered complete you will be asked to fill out and sign required paperwork to

1. Be entered into the federal vendor system, and
2. Determine whether basic eligibility criteria are met. Criteria differ by program, and are described in detail on specific program fact sheets.

Section I provides an overview of the application acceptance process. It should be completed as soon as you are serious about applying for assistance. Once your eligibility has been determined, NRCS will work with you through the application evaluation, selection, and contracting processes.

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## Section II: Determine your resource concerns and needs

Listing current conditions on your property will help provide focus on critical issues. Issues identified in this section will be explored further with NRCS on-site during the development of a conservation plan. The plan will include resource data about your operation, a list of agreed-to conservation practices, and a schedule of when the practices should be completed.

You help decide the practices that are included in your plan, and the order in which the projects are scheduled for implementation. That way, you are ensured that the practices will address the critical issues first and reflect the needs, values, and management skills of your operation.

Conservation plans are required as the basis for all farm bill financial assistance programs. You will only develop one conservation plan for your operation, which will address each program application.

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## Section III: Determine which program fits your operation

Each federal farm bill program has its own eligibility criteria, purpose, list of fundable practices, methods of payment, and sign-up periods. In this section, we provide you with the basics; more detailed information is updated regularly on our website at [www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs).

Application deadlines may require Section III to be completed before planning (Section II) is complete. Although this will slow down the application process, it is acceptable to apply for a program before your planning is complete.



## Section I

### Ensure you are eligible

In order to qualify for a USDA farm bill program, each applicant must meet certain person and land eligibility criteria. The criteria are specific for each program.

The eligibility criteria are defined in the NRCS Conservation Programs manual (<http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov>) and FSA program handbooks, and are summarized in program fact sheets available at USDA Service Centers, in Section III of this workbook, at [www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs) and at [www.fsa.usda.gov/nj/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nj/).

#### When to Apply

A conservation plan must be developed either before, or as part of, the application evaluation process, so many applicants choose to complete Section II prior to making application to any program. These applicants benefit from completing the conservation planning process first because it ensures that the priority resource concerns are identified and addressed, and that the program that best suits their situation is selected for application. They may also benefit by receiving bonus points during the ranking process for having their conservation needs already assessed and conservation practices already scheduled.

By reviewing the basic program information in Section III, however, many applicants can rule out programs for which they, their land, or their resource concerns make them ineligible to qualify for financial assistance. In that case, it is in the applicant's interest to apply to the program first, and develop their conservation plan during the application evaluation process.

Whichever method you choose, any individual person, organization or entity that is seeking financial assistance to implement conservation practices on their land must complete required paperwork to:

1. Determine whether their basic eligibility criteria are met, and
2. Be entered into the federal vendor system to receive their program payments.

Required forms are available online or at your local USDA Service Center, and should be completed and submitted along with or soon after your application is filed. Once your eligibility has been determined, NRCS can work on your application and assist you with remaining program requirements.

**Until your eligibility can be determined, your application will be considered incomplete.**

### Who can fill out the application?

The person that completes the application must have the legal authority to do so. If you are an individual applying for land you own or rent, the process is relatively straight forward. If you are an individual applying on behalf of a family owned corporation, non-profit entity, school or park, then there are more steps involved. The first step is to determine the legal person or entity name under which the application will be made. The name that appears on the application will determine the tax identification number to be used (social security number, employer identification number or IRS number) and to whom payments are issued. Each applicant name must match the tax id number provided. For example, Joe Smith puts his name on his application, but uses an employer identification number for Smith Farms. The system will reject his application, and delay processing. All applicants earning program benefits will receive IRS-1099's, so be sure to use your correct tax identification number on your applications.

### How do you establish legal signature authority?

In order to apply for programs, you must have signature authority to act on behalf of the identified applicant. For **any** situation other than an individual applying on land already identified through an AD-1026 as being owned or operated by that individual, additional paperwork will be required to verify your signature authority. You will need to present original legal documents, power of attorney (FSA-211), notarization or an affixed official seal that has authorized you to act on the applicant's behalf. On some applications, you are required to obtain owner signatures for lands that you do not own to participate in the program.

Preparing for these situations in advance will make processing of your application much quicker and easier!

### What forms are required?

1. Most applicants are required to complete an **AD-1026**, *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification* with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), if one is not already on file for the current crop year. The AD-1026A form which will be attached to the AD-1026 identifies cropland for each farm and tract number associated with the applicant. The form may be confusing for entities such as municipal governments that own land other than cropland, as they are certifying that they are not disturbing HEL land or wetlands without a conservation plan.
2. Depending on the conservation program, applicants are required to fill out a **CCC-526**, *Payment Eligibility Average Adjusted Gross Income Certification*. This form identifies the type of applicant; choices are Individual, Corporation, Trust or Estate, Limited Partnership, Limited Liability Company, Limited Liability Partnership or Similar Entity, Tax-Exempt or Non-Profit Organization. Based on the type of applicant selected, it identifies the additional paperwork required to determine average adjusted gross income (AGI). This form is necessary since most farm bill programs exclude payment eligibility from applicants who have an AGI greater than \$2.5 million for the three tax years preceding the application fiscal year and less than 75 percent of their AGI is derived from farming, ranching or forestry operations.



3. Depending on the conservation program, form CCC-502 may be required to be filed with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to determine the applicant eligibility for program payments. Legal documents for the applicant must accompany these forms, providing supporting documentation for their farming operation.
  - a. **CCC502-A**, Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review for an Individual
  - b. **CCC502-B**, Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review for a Joint Venture or General Partnership
  - c. **CCC502-C**, Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review for Corporations, Limited Partnerships or Other Similar Entities
  - d. **CCC502-D**, Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review for an Estate or Trust
4. Again depending on the conservation program, a CCC501A form is needed to identify the members of the entity. For example, the Smith Farms limited partnership consists of two members, Joe Smith and Bob Smith.
  - a. **CCC501-A**, Members Information - used to determine the structure of entities for payment purposes.
  - b. **CCC501-B**, Designation of "Permitted Entities" - used to designate up to 3 entities to receive a payment or benefit under applicable programs.
5. Once your application is selected, additional forms will need to be completed to process program payments. This includes the SF-1199a form, which provides us with electronic funds transfer information to your banking institution. All USDA program payments are issued through electronic funds transfer or direct deposit.

## **USDA Service Centers in New Jersey:**

### **Freehold Service Center**

4000 Kozloski Rd. Box 5033, Freehold, NJ 07728

Telephone: (732) 462-0075

Serves Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth counties

### **Frenchtown Service Center**

687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2

Frenchtown, NJ 08825

Telephone: (908) 782-4614

Serves Hunterdon, Somerset and Union counties

### **Hackettstown Service Center**

Hackettstown Commerce Park

Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Rd, Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Telephone: (908) 852-2576

Serves Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties

### **Hainesport Service Center**

1289 Route 38, Hainesport, NJ 08036

Telephone: (609) 267-0811

Serves Burlington, Camden and Ocean counties

### **Vineland Service Center**

1317 South Main Rd. Bldg 3, Vineland, NJ 08360

Telephone: (856) 205-1225

Serves Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties

### **Woodstown Service Center**

51 Cheney Road, Suite 2

Woodstown, NJ 08098

Telephone: (856) 769-1126

Serves Gloucester and Salem counties

## Section I Worksheet:

Name (legal/full) of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant is an ☐ Individual ☐ Business or Entity

Common or Business Name (if used by you or others to identify the operation or land):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Business Type (if applicable, select from list below): \_\_\_\_\_

Employer ID or Social Security Number (whichever is applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: street \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Property location (if different than above): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: (check the preferred contact method)

☐ Home phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Cell phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Farm phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Fax number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email address \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Best time of day to contact me is:

\_\_\_\_\_ or

\_\_\_\_\_

I have contacted my local USDA Service Center and completed all of the required paperwork to determine my eligibility for programs, or verified that all paperwork previously submitted is up-to-date.

☐ YES ☐ NO, but my appointment is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Types:

Churches, Charities

City Owned

Corporation with Stockholders

Corporation with no Stockholders

County Owned

Estate

Federal Owned

Financial Institution

General Entity Member

General Partnership

Group of Individuals

Individual Operating a Small Business

Joint Venture

Limited Liability Company

Limited Partnership

Non-Profit Organization

Public School

State Owned

Trust Irrevocable

Trust - Revocable

Unknown, none of the above



## Section II

### Determine your resource concerns and needs

#### Section II Worksheet:

##### 1. Set Your Objectives

The best place to start planning is to set objectives. Objectives will keep you focused on the critical issues and provide you with measurement tools to determine progress. Set realistic objectives that can be reached with small achievable steps. State clearly what you want to happen on your land and where you want to be within a selected time frame. Clear objectives will help the conservation planner develop a plan that is right for you.

##### **Natural Resources Objectives**

Short Term: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Long Term: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

##### **Production & Economic Objectives**

Short Term: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Long Term: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

##### **Quality of Life Objectives**

Short Term: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Long Term: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What do you want your land to look like in five years?**

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## 2. Information about Your Land

Complete the following items, to the best of your ability. Make note of any concern or question you may have for the conservation planner. The more information you supply to us the easier it will be to assist you.

Name of Landowner(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Manager or Land User: \_\_\_\_\_

Will the operator and/or owner contribute to conservation planning, plan revisions and plan implementation? ☐ Y or ☐ N

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Watershed: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your land: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe any known archaeological, historical or cultural features present on your land:

\_\_\_\_\_

List streams or creeks running through or adjacent to your land:

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your domestic water source (well, public) and if it's a well, where is it located?

\_\_\_\_\_

List contracts, easements, and/or agreements that have been entered into, for technical or financial assistance, which restrict your land management practices (eg. land preservation through state, county, or municipality):

\_\_\_\_\_

List conservation practices you have already applied on your land:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List conservation practices you have considered applying:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List funding programs in which you are interested, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Identify ("X") the types of concerns you have for your land on the chart below.

Resource Issue	Crop fields	Hay fields	Pasture areas	Livestock areas	Woods	Barn yards	Stream corridors	Other areas
<b>acres</b>								
Erosion or Soil issues								
Drainage concerns or excess water								
Waste management, manure storage or use								
Grazing issues – plant quality, livestock water, erosion, etc.								
Irrigation and water management								
Fertilizer or pesticide management								
Endangered species habitat (plant or animal)								
Other issue								

Provide any detailed information about your selections above: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the item you would like additional information on:**

☐ Soil Quality/Assessment

☐ Forest Management

☐ Cropland Erosion Control

☐ Water Quality Assessment

☐ Nutrient or Pesticide Management

☐ Wetland Restoration

☐ Livestock & Dairies

☐ Irrigation Water Management

☐ Manure Management

☐ Air Quality

☐ Pasture/Grassland Management

☐ Wildlife Management

☐ Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning

Please complete the pages that follow as applicable. Again, the more complete and accurate your information is, the easier and more accurately we will be able to assist you.

## Cropping Supplement

### Crops Grown

Crops grown in a typical year (including cover crop)	Total Acres	Typical Planting Date	Typical Harvest Date	Is residue removed? (Y/N)

### Crop Rotation Description (if applicable)

Acres	Typical Cropping Sequence (include # years in rotation)
Ex. 53 acres	3 years: soybeans, winter wheat, corn residue left, corn residue left

### Tillage & Other Field Operations

Tillage or other field operation	Implement	Crop	Date

Most recent soil test date: \_\_\_\_\_ Most recent manure test date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Irrigation Supplement

List irrigation water source(s), (if a pond, please list depth and surface area of pond ; if a well, please list diameter, depth and yield of well):

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Do you have a water allocation certification?    ☐ YES            ☐ NO

### Pump Information:

System Type (solid set, gun, pivot, drip, micro-sprinkler, other)		
Pump Type (centrifugal, submersible, vertical turbine)		
HP		
Vertical Lift or Suction Head (Ft)		
Flow rate (gpm)		

### Irrigation System Details

Field Number							
Field Size (acres)							
Typical Crop							
Length of lateral(s) (feet)							
Distance between laterals or towpath (feet)							
Number of zones							
Number of laterals per zone							
Number sprinklers zone							
Sprinkler flow rate (gpm) or Emitter flow rate (gph)							
Flow rate to each zone (gpm)							
Time to irrigate each zone (hours)							
Interval between irrigations days							

## Livestock Supplement

Livestock Kind	Housing	Numbers	Average Weight	# Days Held Annually

Describe your livestock management: (forages and roughages used, season of use, grazing system)

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Describe your manure storage and applications of manure: \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe your livestock watering system: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Dairy Supplement

Breed of cows: \_\_\_\_\_

### Animal Description

Stage of cows	Number	Housing and bedding used (Freestall, Drylot, etc.) / (Straw, Shavings, etc.)
Milking cows		
Dry cows		
Bred Heifers		
Heifers and Calves		

## Pasture Supplement

### What is your greatest pasture need or interest?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved grassland/pasture condition, | <input type="checkbox"/> Irrigation needs,           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pasture rotation options,             | <input type="checkbox"/> General pasture management, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forage quality and/or quantity,       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noxious weeds                         |  |

1. Type(s) of animals that use the pasture \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the season of use for the pasture? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are additional acreages used in conjunction with this property for livestock rotation or herd management? ☐ Y or ☐ N  
If yes, should these acreages be incorporated into your conservation plan? ☐ Y or ☐ N
4. Do you currently use pasture management practices? ☐ Y or ☐ N  
If yes, please list (e.g. dragging, scheduled mowing, over-seeding, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Wildlife Supplement:

1. Are you interested in wildlife conservation on your property? ☐ Y or ☐ N
2. What areas could be considered for wildlife preservation on your property?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are there other wildlife conservation practices you are considering?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List the fish, wildlife or plant species of concern on or near your land (game, seasonal wildlife, threatened species, etc):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Section III

### Determine which program fits your operation

#### Federal Farm Bill Conservation Programs Offered in New Jersey – A Summary

Program:	<b><i>Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)</i></b>	<b><i>Conservation Security Program (CSP)</i></b>
<b>Description:</b>	Provides an opportunity for producers who do not normally participate in government programs to reduce the economic risk of adopting new conservation measures. Targeted to limited resource farmers and small-scale farms.	Rewards producers who are actively protecting soil and water quality on their cropland and pasture. Provides additional incentives for exceeding minimum standards.
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Available in NJ only to agricultural producers who qualify for farmland assessment. *Limited resource - annual income of the farmer is less than 50% of the average county income.	Privately owned land that meets certain eligibility requirements of soil and water quality. Specific requirements are announced each year by publication in the federal register.
<b>Type of Assistance/ Duration of Program:</b>	Cost-share reimbursements available of up to 75% for practices that reduce production risk by reducing erosion, or improving land management and crop diversification. Cost share is limited to \$50,000 per year.	Applications are accepted only during announced sign-up periods and require in-person interview. Based on participation tier, landowner may receive payments of up to \$45,000 annually for 5-10 years.

Program:	<b><i>Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)</i></b>	<b><i>CRP Enhancement Program (CREP)</i></b>
<b>Description:</b>	Provides for annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource conserving covers on eligible farmland.	Provides for annual rental and incentive payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. CREP focuses on buffer practices such as riparian buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways, and contour buffer strips.
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Marginal pastureland or highly erodible cropland that has been planted for 4 to 6 of the years prior to the 2002 Farm Bill is eligible for CRP.	Marginal pastureland or highly erodible cropland that has been planted for 4 to 6 of the years prior to the 2002 Farm Bill is eligible for CRP. CREP is open to any eligible land that is suitable for the buffer practice.
<b>Type of Assistance/ Duration of Program:</b>	Annual rental payments are made on land based on the agricultural rental value. Cost-share payments are made for up to 50% of cost of establishing conservation practices. Payments are made for 10-15 years.	Annual rental and incentive payments are made on land based on the agricultural rental value. Cost-share payments are made for up to 50% of cost of establishing conservation practices. Payments are made for 10-15 years. CREP provides additional cost-share through a state and federal partnership.

Program:	<b><i>Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)</i></b>	<b><i>Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)</i></b>
<b>Description:</b>	Provides assistance to install permanent measures or adopt new management strategies that address existing resource concerns on farms. EQIP promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals.	Provides funding to restore and protect private grasslands, pasturelands, and certain other lands while maintaining the areas in grass.
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Private agricultural land, including eligible cropland, pasture, private non-industrial forest land, and other farm or ranch lands.	Landowners must have clear title (for easements) or general control of the acreage. Offers for enrollment must contain at least 20 contiguous acres. Eligible land must be or must have been historically dominated by grass or forbs.
<b>Type of Assistance/ Duration of Program:</b>	Financial and technical assistance cost-share payments are available at various reimbursement rates for conservation practices that address critical resource needs. Contracts last for a minimum one year after last practice is installed, up to a maximum 10 years.	Several enrollment options exist for easements or rental agreements ranging from 10 years to permanent easement. Cost-share payments up to 90% are available.

Program:	<b><i>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)</i></b>	<b><i>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)</i></b>
<b>Description:</b>	Provides financial incentives to landowners to enhance and restore wetlands on lands previously drained for agricultural use. Landowners benefit by seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming in potentially difficult areas.	Provides financial assistance for the enhancement or creation of habitat for target species of concern, or for specific habitat types in decline. Also can provide funding for habitat projects on school sites.
<b>Eligibility:</b>	Landowners must have owned the land for at least 12 months before enrollment. Most private wetlands that were converted before 1985 are eligible. Land must have been cropped, must be restorable and must meet certain eligibility requirements.	All non-federal lands are eligible. Applicants do not have to be agricultural producers, but must have control of the land for the life of the contract.
<b>Type of Assistance/ Duration of Program:</b>	<i>Permanent easement</i> – offers 100% of permanent easement and construction costs; <i>30-year easement</i> – 75% of permanent easement and construction costs; <i>Restoration Cost-Share Agreement</i> –75% cost-share for construction costs; agreements up to 10 years.	Cost share payments available of up to 75% for practices that enhance specific wildlife habitat elements for targeted species. Contracts are a minimum of 5 years up to a maximum 10 years.



New Jersey 2006

## Agricultural Management Assistance Program



The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program is a voluntary program for eligible agricultural producers in fifteen states. AMA targets three specific concerns: water management, tree planting, and risk management through production diversification and resource conservation practices. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) professionals work with producers to develop a conservation plan, design conservation practices, and provide guidance to help implement the plan.

AMA is available only to agricultural producers who qualify for farmland assessment. Since 2000, NJ has funded over \$1.3 million in AMA conservation projects. The NJ program specifically targets limited resource farmers, small farms, and producers who have had limited participation in other cost-share programs. However, most producers can qualify to apply based on the five criteria listed below.

### What are the Applicant Qualifications?

Applicants must own or control the land, agree to implement specific eligible conservation practices, and qualify for farmland assessment. Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Average annual gross farm sales are \$60,000 or less over the last three years
2. Total gross household income is \$43,941 or less
3. Farmed land (owned and rented cropland and pasture) is a total of less than:
  - 50 acres - when income from fruit, vegetable or specialty crops is >50% of total farm production income OR
  - 200 acres (for all others)
4. Total USDA program payments received over the past 5 years are less than \$10,000
5. Farm production income is 75% or more of total gross household income

### How are Applicants Ranked?

Applicants are ranked by priority designations, as follows:

- Priority 1 - meets all 5 of the qualifications
- Priority 2 - meets 4 of the qualifications.
- Priority 3 - meets 3 of the qualifications.
- Priority 4 - meets 2 of the qualifications.
- Priority 5 - meets 1 of the qualifications.

Additional subcategories are used if needed to rank applications. The subcategories are based on the environmental risk factors of the applicant land area, and not the operation.

### How Does Signup for AMA Work?

Producers can sign up for AMA at any time. In addition to the basic application form, all applicants are required to complete a "self-assessment" workbook in order to determine their qualifications and need for the specific conservation practices offered by the program. The workbook details additional information specific to each conservation practice including cost share rates provided.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

### What are the Payment Rates and Terms?

Cost share practices are reimbursed using one of three methods. Flat rate practices are reimbursed at 75% of a pre-determined rate, regardless of actual cost. Other cost-shared practices are reimbursed at a rate up to 75% of the actual cost, not to exceed a pre-determined maximum. Practices eligible for incentive payments receive 100% of the specified amount for a maximum period of five years. Producers may contribute to the cost of a practice through in-kind sources, including personal or donated labor and use of personal equipment.

The [NJ 2006 AMA Cost Table](#) is used to determine cost share and incentive payment rates. It is available on the NJ website ([www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama)) or at your local Service Center.

### What Practices Can Receive Cost Sharing Funding?

The conservation provisions of this program authorize payments to producers under three program areas:

## For more information, contact your NRCS Service Center

**Freehold** – (732) 462-0075  
Serving Mercer, Middlesex & Monmouth

**Frenchtown** – (908) 782-4614  
Serving Hunterdon, Somerset & Union

**Hackettstown** – (908) 852-2576  
Serving Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic,  
Morris, Sussex & Warren

**Hainesport** – (609) 267-0811  
Serving Burlington, Camden & Ocean

**Vineland** – (856) 205-1225  
Serving Atlantic, Cape May & Cumberland

**Woodstown** – (856) 769-1126  
Serving Gloucester & Salem

### 1. To construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures

#### Eligible practices:

- High Efficiency Irrigation Systems – Permanently installed upgrades to existing systems, or new systems that will be 80% efficient upon completion. Irrigation water management is required.
- Rehabilitation of irrigation pond dams – For dam rehabilitation projects, a dam must be listed on the state's dam registry, and have a recent dam safety report indicating the deficiencies and required repairs to meet the NJ dam safety requirements, certified by a NJ licensed engineer.

Note: NRCS engineering assistance is not provided on any irrigation or dam rehabilitation project; all engineering will be provided by the landowner at his/her own expense. Cost share is limited to actual construction costs.

### 2. To plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality

#### Eligible practices:

- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

### 3. To mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming

#### Eligible practices:

- **Cropland Practices:** Cover Crop, Contour Buffer Strips, Critical Area Planting, Deep Tillage, Field Border, Filter Strip, Grassed Waterway, Herbaceous Wind Barriers, Mulching, Residue Management, No Till/Strip Till, Irrigation Water Management, Nutrient Management, Pest Management, Transition to Organic farming, Vegetative Barrier, Conservation Cover (Conversion to permanent cover)
- **Grazing Lands Practices:** Fence, Prescribed Grazing, Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment, Pasture and Hayland Planting, Stream Crossing, Use Exclusion, Watering Facility, Water Well, Heavy Use Area Protection (in pasture)

### What is the Contract Period for AMA?

Once an application is selected for funding, a conservation plan is developed with the help of NRCS. A contract detailing the practices, cost-share or incentive payment rates, schedule for implementation, and operation and maintenance requirements must be signed by all parties before work can begin. Contracts are for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 10 years. Practices must be maintained for the official life span of the practice, regardless of the length of the contract.



# CSP

CSP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land, as well as forested land that is an incidental part of an agriculture operation. The program is available in all 50 States, the Caribbean Area and the Pacific Basin area. The program provides equitable access to benefits to all producers, regardless of size of operation, crops produced, or geographic location.

CSP uses a sign-up process that is different from many of the other farm bill programs. Sign-up periods are announced nationally once a year in specific watershed areas. Not all producers will be eligible to apply for CSP every year. A national Self-Assessment Workbook, which is different than this workbook, is used to assess your basic qualifications for the program.

By going through the current CSP Self-Assessment Workbook, potential CSP participants will get a good idea about whether they are eligible for CSP when it is announced for their watershed. The workbook is available at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

## Fact Sheet

March 2005

## Conservation Security Program

### Overview

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations.

CSP provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land, as well as forested land that is an incidental part of an agriculture operation.

CSP is available in all 50 States, the Caribbean area and the Pacific Basin area. The program provides equitable access to benefits to all producers, regardless of size of operation, crops produced, or geographic location.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) (Pub. L. 107-171) amended the Food Security Act of 1985 to authorize the program. CSP is administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

### Benefits

CSP will help producers maintain conservation stewardship and implement additional conservation practices that provide added environmental enhancement, while creating powerful incentives for other producers to

meet those same standards of conservation performance.

The conservation benefits gained will help farms and ranches be more environmentally sustainable and will increase the natural resources benefits provided to all Americans.

### How CSP Works

1. The CSP sign-up will be offered in selected watersheds across the Nation. Selected watersheds are listed on the Internet from:  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/> and in NRCS offices nationwide.
2. Producers complete a self-assessment, including description of conservation activities on their operations, to help determine eligibility for CSP at this time. The self-assessment is available from:  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/> and in NRCS state offices on compact disk or as a printed workbook.
3. Eligible producers in the selected watersheds complete the self-assessment and schedule an interview to submit an application at their local NRCS office.
4. Based on the application, description of current conservation activities, and the interview, NRCS determines CSP eligibility and in which program tier and enrollment category the applicant may participate.

### Eligibility

The producer and the producer's operation first must meet the basic eligibility criteria:

- The land must be privately owned or Tribal land and the majority of the land

must be located within one of the selected watersheds.

- The applicant must be in compliance with highly erodible and wetland provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, have an active interest in the agricultural operation, and have control of the land for the life of the contract.
- The applicant must share in the risk of producing any crop or livestock and be entitled to a share in the crop or livestock marketed from the operation.

All applicants must meet the following minimum tier eligibility and contract requirements, plus any additional requirements in the sign-up announcement:

- For Tier I, the producer must have addressed soil quality and water quality to the described minimum level of treatment for eligible land uses on part of the agricultural operation prior to acceptance.
- For Tier II, the producer must have addressed soil quality and water quality to the described minimum level of treatment on all eligible land uses on the entire agricultural operation prior to acceptance and agree to address one additional resource by the end of the contract period.
- For Tier III, the producer must have addressed all applicable resource concerns to a resource management system level that meets the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide standards on all eligible land uses on the entire agricultural operation before acceptance into the program and have riparian zones adequately treated.

Soil quality practices include crop rotations, cover crops, tillage practices, prescribed grazing, and providing adequate wind barriers.

Water quality practices include conservation tillage, filter strips, terraces, grassed waterways, managed access to water courses,

nutrient and pesticide management, prescribed grazing, and irrigation water management.

### ***CSP Contract Payment***

Applicants may submit only one application for each sign-up. Producers who are participants in an existing conservation stewardship contract are not eligible to submit another application.

CSP contract payments include one or more of the following:

- An annual stewardship component for the existing base level conservation treatment.
- An annual existing practice component for the maintenance of existing conservation practices.
- An enhancement component for exceptional conservation effort and additional conservation practices or activities that provide increased resource benefits beyond the prescribed level.
- A one-time new practice component for additional needed practices.

Enhancements will be made for exceptional conservation effort and additional conservation practices or activities that provide increased resource benefits beyond the prescribed level. There are five types of enhancement activities:

1. The improvement of a significant resource concern to a condition that exceeds the requirements for the participant's tier of participation and contract requirements.
2. An improvement in a priority local resource condition, as determined by NRCS, such as water quality and wildlife.
3. Participation in an on-farm conservation research, demonstration, or pilot project.
4. Cooperation with other producers to implement watershed or regional resource conservation plans that involve at least 75 percent of the producers in the targeted area.
5. Implementation of assessment and evaluation activities relating to practices



included in the conservation security plan, such as water quality sampling at field edges, drilling monitoring wells and collecting data, and gathering plant samples for specific analysis.

Total payments are determined by the tier of participation, conservation treatments completed, and the acres enrolled:

- For Tier I, contracts are for 5 years; maximum payment is \$20,000 annually.
- For Tier II, contracts are for 5 to 10 years; maximum payment is \$35,000 annually.
- For Tier III, contracts are for 5 to 10 years; maximum payment is \$45,000 annually.

### ***For More Information***

If you need more information about CSP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>



Visit USDA on the Web at:  
<http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>

**Note:** This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of farm legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementing policies and procedures. Please check back for updates.



## Conservation Reserve Program

### Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorized CRP. The program is also governed by regulations published in 7 CFR, part 1410. The program is implemented by FSA on behalf of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

### Benefits

CRP protects millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country.

### CRP Administration

FSA administers CRP, while technical support functions are provided by:

- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS);
- USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service;
- State forestry agencies;
- Local soil and water conservation districts; and
- Private sector providers of technical assistance.

### CRP General Sign-up

Producers can offer land for CRP general sign-up enrollment only during designated sign-up periods. For information on upcoming sign-ups, contact your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit FSA's Web site at: [http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndisapi.dll/oip\\_agency/index?state=us&agency=fsa](http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndisapi.dll/oip_agency/index?state=us&agency=fsa)

### CRP Continuous Sign-up

Environmentally desirable land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled at any time under CRP continuous sign-up. Certain eligibility requirements still apply, but offers are not subject to competitive bidding. Further information on CRP continuous sign-up is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up."

### Eligible Producers

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the CRP sign-up period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

### Eligible Land

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Certain marginal pastureland that is enrolled in the Water Bank Program or suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes.



## Fact Sheet

### Conservation Reserve Program

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#### **Additional Cropland Requirements**

In addition to the eligible land requirements, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of 8 or higher;
- Be expiring CRP acreage; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

#### **CRP Payments**

FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, including certain incentive payments, and cost-share assistance:

##### **■ Rental Payments**

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent or cash-rent equivalent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

##### **■ Maintenance Incentive Payments**

CRP annual rental payments may include an additional amount up to \$5 per acre per year as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations.

##### **■ Cost-share Assistance**

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance can be an amount not more than 50 percent of the participants' costs in establishing approved practices.

##### **■ Other Incentives**

FSA may offer additional financial incentives of up to 20 percent of the annual payment for certain continuous sign-up practices.

#### **Ranking CRP Offers**

Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data for each of the EBI factors based on the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking. FSA uses the following EBI factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching;
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;

- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion; and
- Cost.

#### **For More Information**

For more information on CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>

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## **Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up**

### **Overview**

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long term, resource conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost share assistance.

FSA administers CRP, while other USDA agencies and partners provide technical support. More detailed information on CRP is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program."

### **CRP Continuous Sign-up**

Environmentally desirable land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time under continuous sign-up. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding. Continuous sign-up contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration.

To offer land for continuous sign-up, producers should contact their local

FSA offices. To find your local office, visit FSA's Web site at: [http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndisapi.dll/oip\\_agency/index?state=us&agency=fsa](http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndisapi.dll/oip_agency/index?state=us&agency=fsa)

### **Contract Effective Date**

For continuous sign-up, the effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to 6 months.

If the acreage is currently under CRP contract and is within one year of the scheduled expiration date, the effective date is October 1 following the expiration date.

### **Eligible Producers**

To be eligible for CRP continuous sign-up enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new

owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

### **Eligible Land**

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Certain marginal pastureland that is enrolled in the Water Bank Program or suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes.

### **Eligible Practices**

Also, the land must be eligible and suitable for any of the following conservation practices:

- riparian buffers;
- wildlife habitat buffers;
- wetland buffers;
- filter strips;
- wetland restoration;
- grass waterways;
- shelterbelts;
- living snow fences;
- contour grass strips;
- salt tolerant vegetation; and
- shallow water areas for wildlife.



## **Fact Sheet**

### *Conservation Reserve Program*

#### *Continuous Sign-up*

Land within an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-designated public wellhead area may also be eligible for enrollment on a continuous basis.

#### **CRP Continuous Sign-up Payments**

FSA provides CRP continuous sign-up participants with rental payments, including any incentives, and cost share assistance:

##### ■ **Rental Payments**

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent or cash rent equivalent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

The per acre annual rental rate may not exceed FSA's maximum payment amount and is calculated in advance of enrollment. While continuous sign-up acceptance is not determined by a competitive offer process, producers may elect to receive an amount less than the maximum payment rate.

##### ■ **Cost-share Assistance**

FSA provides cost share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible

cropland. The cost-share assistance can be an amount not more than 50 percent of the participants' costs in establishing approved practices.

##### ■ **Financial Incentives**

As a part of annual rental payments, FSA offers financial incentives of up to 20 percent of the soil rental rate for field windbreaks, grass waterways, filter strips, and riparian buffers. An additional 10 percent may be added to the soil rental rate for land located within EPA designated wellhead protection areas. A per acre payment rate may also be added for maintenance of eligible practices.

##### ■ **Additional Financial Incentives**

Also as a part of annual rental payments, FSA offers participants the following payment enhancements:

- An up front signing incentive payment (CRP-SIP) of \$100 to \$150 per acre (depending on contract length) for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one time SIP will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met.
- A practice incentive payment (CRP-PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one time PIP will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

#### **For More Information**

For more information on CRP continuous sign-up, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>

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## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program New Jersey State

### Overview

The New Jersey Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is designed to help farmers reduce impairment from agricultural water runoff sources in an effort to improve water quality along both impaired and unimpaired New Jersey streams. Retiring highly erodible cropland and planting it to protective vegetation will enhance water quality; reduce water treatment costs for New Jersey's cities; and provide shelter, nesting areas and food for many species of wildlife. Buffers planted along stream banks and rivers will filter phosphorus, nitrogen and sediments from the waterways and reduce biological impairment in the Atlantic Ocean.

CREP is a federal-state natural resource conservation program that addresses state and nationally significant agricultural related environmental problems. Under CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10- to 15-years. Participants remove marginal pastureland or cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

### Eligible Areas

Producers can offer eligible cropland and marginal pastureland in New Jersey's Delaware and Wallkill watersheds and the Northeast, Raritan and Atlantic regions of the state that drain toward the Atlantic Ocean. Interested producers should contact their local FSA county office for specific information regarding their eligibility for CREP.

### Goals

The goals of the New Jersey CREP include:

- Enrolling 30,000 acres of eligible farmland into CREP for the planting of grass waterways, contour grass strips, filter strips and riparian buffers;
- Maintaining and restoring ecological functions of streams by reducing biological impairment and improving water quality;
- Addressing non-point source pollution from agricultural runoff by reducing 26,000 pounds of phosphorous and 7 million pounds of Total Suspended Solids (dirt and other foreign particles) annually;
- Maintaining a high level of water quality in unimpaired streams through the prevention of additional pollutants;
- Enhancing farm viability; and
- Establishing permanent easements to aid in reaching the state's open-space goals.

### Approved Conservation Practices

To better serve program goals, the following CRP conservation practices are included in the New Jersey CREP:

- CP8A - Grass Waterways, Noneasement;
- CP15A - Establishment of Permanent Vegetative Cover (Contour Grass Strips), Noneasement;
- CP21 - Filter Strips (Grass Strips); and
- CP22 - Riparian Buffers (Trees Planted Next to Streams).

### Sign-up and Eligibility Requirements

Sign-up for the New Jersey CREP begins March 15, 2004, and continues until enrollment goals are attained, or through Dec. 31, 2007, whichever comes first. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as a buffer practice. Persons who have acreage under an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are ineligible for CREP on that acreage until that contract expires. Other requirements will also apply. Contract terms will be set out in the CRP contract and regulations.



## **Fact Sheet**

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program New Jersey State**

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#### **Payments**

Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, New Jersey CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of USDA payments:

- **Signing Incentive Payment:** A one-time payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in a CP8A, CP21 or CP22 practice. This payment is made after the contract has been signed and approved.
- **Practice Incentive Payment:** A one-time payment equal to about 40 percent of the eligible cost for enrollment under approved conservation practices.
- **Cost-share Assistance:** Cost-share of up to 50 percent for the installation of approved conservation practices.
- **Infeasible to Farm Acreage Payment:** An annual rental payment at the base soil rental rate for otherwise eligible cropland enrolled as infeasible to farm acreage. Infeasible to farm acreage only applies to practice CP21 or CP22. Incentives do not apply to acres enrolled as infeasible to farm.
- **Annual Rental Payment:** An annual payment for the life of the contract. The payment consists of three components:
  - **Base Soil Rental Rate,** which is determined by calculating the normal CRP weighted average soil rental rate for the three predominant soil types using the current posted applicable local soil rental rates.

- **Incentive Payment** of 100 percent for land established as a CP8A, CP15A or CP21 practice; and 150 percent for land established as a CP22 practice.
- **Annual Maintenance Payment** in an amount consistent with applicable CRP procedures.

In addition, the State of New Jersey will:

- Pay 10 percent of the cost to install approved conservation practices.
- Contribute no less than 20 percent of the overall annual in-kind and direct program costs.
- Offer payments to participants for permanent CREP easements through state-funded programs.

#### **Program Cost**

The total cost over a ten-year period is estimated at \$100 million, with USDA contributing \$77 million and New Jersey State funding \$23 million. The \$100 million does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers.

#### **Enrollment in Other Programs**

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll eligible land in the regular general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous sign-up. For instance, CREP payments are at a higher effective rate.

#### **Haying and Grazing**

Haying and grazing are not permitted during the CRP contract period unless USDA allows them for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

#### **For More Information**

More information on the New Jersey CREP is available from local FSA county offices and on FSA's Web site at:  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm)

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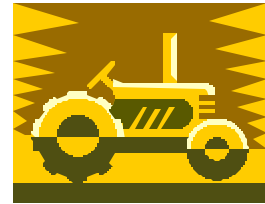
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## New Jersey 2006

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program



The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

NRCS professionals work with producers to develop a conservation plan, design conservation practices, and provide guidance to help implement the plan.

### What are the Applicant Qualifications?

Applicants must own or control the land, agree to implement specific eligible conservation practices within specified time frames, and qualify for farmland assessment. Applicants must be compliant with all conservation provisions of the 2002 farm bill, and have current crop and producer records on file with USDA's Farm Service Agency.

### How are Applicants Ranked?

Applications are first screened for environmental risk based on the existing soil and water resource hazards. Only those applications for practices on land where the greatest potential environmental risk exist are selected for ranking.

Applicants are ranked based on how the selected practices address the national program priorities, and any local resource concerns that are identified annually. Practices must also be cost-effective to achieve the best rank.

### How Does Signup for EQIP Work?

Producers can sign up for EQIP at any time. In addition to the basic application form, all applicants are required to complete a "self-assessment" workbook in order to determine their qualifications and need for the specific conservation practices offered by the program.

### What is the Contract Period for EQIP?

A contract detailing the practices, cost-share or incentive payment rates, schedule for implementation, and operation and maintenance requirements must be signed by all parties before work can begin. Contracts are for a minimum of 1 year following the installation of the last scheduled practice, and for a maximum of 10 years. Practices must be maintained for the official life span of the practice, regardless of the length of the contract.

### What are the Payment Rates and Terms?

Cost share practices are reimbursed using one of three methods. Flat rate practices are reimbursed at a pre-determined rate, regardless of actual cost. Other cost-shared practices are reimbursed at a % of the actual cost, not to exceed a pre-determined maximum. Practices eligible for incentive payments receive 100% of the specified amount for a maximum period of five years.

Under EQIP, different practices receive different types and levels of cost-share. Details are available on the NJ website at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip>.

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### What Practices Can Receive Cost Sharing Funding?

Eligible practices under the EQIP program are based on the resource concern or concerns being addressed. Each year, the resource concerns affecting agriculture in NJ are reviewed and prioritized by the State Technical Committee.

Resource concerns fall into these major categories: Soil, Water, Air, Plants, and Animals. Subcategories that have received high priority in the past include soil quality, surface water quality, airborne particulate matter control, threatened and endangered plant and animal habitat, water quantity for irrigation, and excess nutrients and pesticides in runoff water.

For example, if nutrient runoff is the resource concern, then practices such as nutrient management, filter strips, riparian buffers, or contour buffer strips are eligible for funding. If manure management is the concern, practices that address the handling, storage, and ultimate land disposal of the manure are eligible for funding.

NRCS, in conjunction with the State Technical Committee, limits the list of eligible practices available to address each resource concern based on the practice suitability and cost-effectiveness. The current list of eligible practices is available on the NJ website.

For more information, contact  
your NRCS Service Center

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### NJ Priority Concerns

1. **Nutrient and pesticide runoff from agricultural fields** – addressed through conservation practices such as nutrient management, pest management, agricultural chemical handling facilities, and buffer practices
2. **Excess nutrients in concentrated runoff water** – addressed through manure handling, transfer, and storage systems, barnyard runoff control practices, and development of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan
3. **Forage condition for grazing** – addressed through conservation practices that provide for or enhance grazing systems that result in less frequent concentration of animals in buildings and sacrifice lots
4. **Erosion on Cropland** – addressed through conservation measures that reduce sheet and rill erosion or practices that address concentrated runoff and gully erosion
5. **Water quantity for irrigation** – addressed through implementation of low flow watering systems and water management plans
6. **Air Quality** – addressed through management practices such as reduced tillage, or conservation practices such as windbreaks and shelterbelts.





# GRP

## Grassland Reserve Program

### 2006 New Jersey Grassland Reserve Program

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program offering private landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. The GRP was authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill with the intent of protecting and enhancing grasslands which play a vital role in protecting water quality and providing wildlife habitat.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Forest Service are coordinating implementation of GRP. The program will protect vulnerable grasslands from conversion to cropland or other uses, restore previous and declining grassland areas, and help producers improve grass-based agricultural operations.

#### Enrollment options include:

- **Permanent Easements.** Payments are based on the fair market value of the property less the grazing value.
- **30-year Easements.** The landowner is paid 30 percent of the cost of a permanent easement.
- **Rental Agreements.** 10, 15, 20, or 30-year options are available. Seventy-five percent of the grazing value will be paid in annual payments for the length of the agreement.

Cost share for implementing needed conservation treatments is available under each of the enrollment options. (see reverse)

**Eligible Lands:** In New Jersey, the land offered for GRP must include at least 20 contiguous acres. The land must be currently dominated by non-woody species, or have a history of non-woody vegetation and be able to be restored. Land already covered by a state farmland easement *is not* eligible for a GRP easement; however it is eligible for a rental agreement.

**How to Apply:** Contact your local NRCS Service Center for an application, or visit the NJ program web page at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp> for more details.

New Jersey County	Grazing Value
Atlantic	\$13.00
Bergen	\$15.50
Burlington	\$14.50
Camden	\$14.50
Cape May	\$13.00
Cumberland	\$13.00
Essex	\$15.50
Gloucester	\$14.50
Hudson	\$15.50
Hunterdon	\$13.00
Mercer	\$13.00
Middlesex	\$14.50
Monmouth	\$14.50
Morris	\$15.50
Ocean	\$14.50
Passaic	\$15.50
Salem	\$13.00
Somerset	\$14.50
Sussex	\$13.00
Union	\$15.50
Warren	\$13.00

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Priority grasslands targeted under the NJ program include:

- ✦ grasslands threatened by both agricultural and non-agricultural development,
- ✦ grasslands that provide habitat to threatened and endangered plant and animal species,
- ✦ lands currently used for grazing operations, and
- ✦ lands that can be restored to grassland.

All applications will be ranked based on these priority criteria. Points are awarded for the type of existing land use, the diversity of plants species and wildlife habitat supported, and the risk of conversion to other uses.

**Restoration Cost Share:** A variable cost share rate for conservation practices that restore and maintain grassland functions will be paid based on the type and length of contract.

- ✦ Rental Agreements up to 15 years in length receive **60%** cost-share.
- ✦ Rental Agreements of 20 years or longer; and all Permanent Easement Contracts receive **75%** cost-share.

If your Conservation Plan includes any of the following **conservation practices**, you may be eligible for cost-share (as indicated above) as part of your contract:

- Brush Management for renovation of existing grassed areas,
- Early Successional Wildlife Habitat Management to maintain desired grass/forb species mix,
- Restoration of Declining Habitats to enhance existing species mix,
- Upland or Wetland Habitat Management to maintain desired species mix in designated areas,
- Pasture and Hayland Planting for complete pasture renovation or overseeding,
- Conservation Cover for conversion of cropland to grassland,
- Land Clearing of abandoned, overgrown fields (not mature woods) to re-establish grasses,
- Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment to renovate compacted areas,
- Prescribed Grazing for optimal grazing intensity,
- Use Exclusion for fencing of riparian areas,
- Fencing for new rotational grazing systems,
- Animal Trails and Walkways for access to pastures, including stream crossings,
- Watering Facilities for livestock, including Wells and Pumping Plants,
- Pipeline to support a watering facility,
- Heavy Use Area Protection around watering facilities,
- Erosion control practices such as Grassed Waterways or Diversions



Restored and Protected Grassland, Warren Co.

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# WRP

## Wetland Reserve Program

### New Jersey Wetland Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.



*A restored wetland in a former crop field.*

#### **Benefits**

WRP participants benefit by:

- Receiving financial and technical assistance in return for restoring and protecting wetland functions and values;
- Seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming potentially difficult areas; and
- Having incentives to develop wildlife recreational opportunities on their land.

Wetlands benefit New Jersey by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging groundwater; protecting biological diversity; as well as providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

#### **Eligibility**

To offer a conservation easement, the landowner must have owned the land for at least 12 months prior to enrolling it in the program, except in certain circumstances. To participate in a restoration cost-share agreement, the landowner must show evidence of ownership. To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable and be suitable for wildlife benefits. This includes:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions;
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland;
- Farmed wetland pasture;
- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands;
- Pasture or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long term protection.

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### ***Enrollment Options Include:***

**Permanent Easement:** Easement payments equal the lowest of the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. USDA pays 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.

**30-Year Easement:** Easement payments are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays 75 percent of restoration costs.

For both permanent and 30-year easements, USDA pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office.



*Enhanced shallow water area.*

**Restoration Cost-Share Agreement:** This is a minimum 10-year agreement to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity.

NRCS and its partners continue to provide assistance to landowners after completion of restoration activities. This assistance may be in the form of reviewing restoration measures, clarifying technical and administrative aspects of the easement and project management needs, and providing basic biological and engineering advice on how to achieve optimum results for wetland dependent species.

### ***Uses of WRP Land***

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land, but retain private ownership. On acreage subject to a WRP easement, participants control access to the land and may lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities.

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At any time, a participant may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. This request may include such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock, or harvest wood products. Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.

### ***How to Apply***

Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement or a cost-share restoration agreement through a continuous sign-up process. Applications (form AD-1153) are available at any USDA Service Center office or online at [www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp). Contact your local USDA Service Center for more details, or visit the NJ program web page at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/> for more details.





## Fact Sheet

January, 2005

# Farm Bill 2002

## *Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) in New Jersey*

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a USDA voluntary program for people who want to improve or develop fish and wildlife habitat on non-federal lands. The program is designed to provide both technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and enhance habitat.

Landowners work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. Depending upon the wildlife species of concern, partnering agencies and organizations may be available to provide additional technical and financial assistance. NRCS can provide up to 75% of the costs of the planned practices to implement wildlife habitat improvements. There is **no** financial limit on WHIP contracts. NRCS has provided up to \$30,000 for an individual contract in New Jersey, although most average around \$10,000.

### **Wildlife Habitat Development Plans**

The wildlife habitat development plan will describe the landowner's goals for improving habitat and list habitat improvement practices as well as a schedule for implementation. The landowner will enter into a cost-share agreement with NRCS that will last from 5 to 10 years. Landowners are reimbursed for practice installation costs after the practices are installed. Landowners agree to maintain the installed practices for the life of the plan. NRCS will conduct annual reviews of the plan with the landowners to monitor practice success or failure and determine if plan modifications are needed.

### **Funding and Target Areas**

Since 1998 NRCS has received over \$1.3 million to implement the program in New Jersey. The bulk of these funds were used for direct cost share payments to landowners. WHIP was reauthorized by the 2002 Farm Bill and funds will be available again this year for new projects. Applications are now being accepted.

NRCS and partners in New Jersey have developed a state plan to target WHIP financial and technical assistance in several areas. **Lower Cape May**, a priority wildlife habitat area and the federally threatened **bog turtle** found on farms in open sedge meadows throughout the state are two of the six WHIP priorities for New Jersey.

The other four WHIP priorities in New Jersey are:

#### **Habitats**

- **Early Successional Habitat**
- **Riparian Habitat**

#### **Practices**

- **School Site Habitat Development**
- **Invasive Exotic Vegetation Control**

### **Who Is Eligible?**

To participate in WHIP, landowners must own or have control of the land under consideration. Land is not eligible for WHIP if it is currently enrolled in another USDA Farm Bill conservation program such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Land is also ineligible if it is used for mitigation or if the land is owned by the federal government.

For further information on WHIP or to sign up for the program, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service at your local USDA Service Center. Service Centers are listed in the telephone book under US Department of Agriculture. Program information and office location are also available online at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov>.



